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CHRISTIAN WILLIAM ERNEST DIETRICH.



DIETRICH was truly, to a certain and definable extent, a great painter. He was one of those whose peculiar genius



was of a very universal character. He stood apart and aloof from the many mere mannerists and copyists of his day. He did not bind himself down to any particular branch of art;

Vol. IV.—No. XIX.

his mind took in with an energetic and general grasp almost every phase and part of the subject to which he devoted his existence. And yet he was not an original, and therefore not a great artist in the highest sense.

If we examine that canvas over which the sun spreads all the vigour of its noontide heat, chasing away the light vapour from the ground, and which loses itself in the far-off distance, we shall certainly fancy it a Claude Lorraine. That obscure chamber, with an open window which allows a ray of warm light to fall on the figures of three men sitting round a table, appears to be some work of Rembrandt. That tranquil landscape, where the cows, the goats, and the sheep, are led by a fat and buxom maid, who is about to cross a limpid stream, would readily be taken for a Berghem. It must be Wouvermans who is the author of that picture, in which a horse, with clean and wiry limbs and mounted by a gallant horseman, plays the principal part. One is led to think that it is Salvator Rosa who is the author of this landscape overhung by rugged rocks, in which we catch sight of narrow and dark glens, where hide the robbers of the Abruzzi. Those cascades falling from abrupt summits, where grows the gloomy pine, belong to the style of Everdingen; in the same way that those nymphs leaving the bath, to take refuge in the grove near at hand, must belong to the graceful easel of Poelemberg.

We are mistaken. All these pictures, so varied in composition, so different in style, in manner, are the work of the same painter—of an extraordinary man, who was able to combine all departments of art, and who in each was masterly; guessing at every process, seizing the art of colour, penetrating the character of each style of painting, and imitating them all with wonderful success. The man of whom such rare remarks are true was Christian William Ernest Diétrich.

He was born at Weimar, on the 30th October, 1712, and

his first master was his own father. This hereditary talent was common enough in the last century, and belonged to the Dutch and Flemish schools more especially. At the age of fifteen he entered the studio of Alexander Thiele, an eminent landscape-painter, who resided at Dresden, with the title of painter to the king of Poland, elector of Saxony. He remained with him only three years, and he left the place very much advanced in the only style which he ever successfully followed without being an imitator—that is to say, in landscape. At eighteen a certain great lord of the court* of Dresden took him into his service, and gave him a pension of fifteen hundred livres. Thus enjoying protection and ease, he lived four years at Dresden, free from all care, and wholly devoted to his art. But, in 1734, the great admiration he felt for the paintings of Rembrandt, Jean Both, Berghem, Karel Dujardin, and Elzheimer, impelled him to start on a journey to Holland. Artists are in general restless beings, and few have ever been able to sit down calmly and enjoy any good fortune which might fall to their lot.

During the time that he worked under Alexander Thiele, we may guess, from the way in which he imitated the landscapes of his master, what kind of talent nature had given him. "He did not copy," says Hagedorn, "but he entered on a kind of contest with the original." The fact is that Diétrich was never a mere imitator, because his ambition was too elevated for that. He sought to do better than what lay before him, which prevented him from ever being servile. As soon as he reached Holland he began to rouse himself to a contest with the great models he had so much admired. Elzheimer, Van Ostade, Karel Dujardin, and, above all, Rembrandt, furnished the subject, the style, the composition of numerous paintings. He devoted much labour and time to the study of the great Rembrandt. He undertook to copy from him the art of combining lights and shade—an art which that artist used with such marvellous and wondrous effect. He endeavoured to imitate the warm and transparent tones of his colouring,—his execution, now soft, now hard,—and the bold reliefs of his touch and harmonious arrangement. Diétrich is not the only artist who has endeavoured to walk in the footsteps of this inimitable model; and it must be at once allowed that he did not do so with the same success which attended Govaert Flinck, Arnold de Gelder, Leonard Bramer, and Van Eeckout. If, however, his shades have not the depth which we admire in those of Rembrandt, if he be far inferior in his *chiaroscuro* effects, if his colouring be heavy and wanting in those brilliant and sharp tones that belong to the painter of the "Night Watch," if his impastings upon the light are heavy without being thick—it is because to imitate and rival Rembrandt was a thing all but above the power of any man. We do not believe that what one man has done, another may not do; but when an artist has, as it were, created something new to equal or excel, it is then extremely difficult and doubtful. But with these reservations, and looking at the canvases painted by Diétrich, after Rembrandt, only as excellent pasticcios, it is impossible not to own the great and deserving talent of the man who executed the painting known as the *Piscina*, engraved by Flipart, and the "Return of the Prodigal Son," with a great many other etchings, of which we shall presently have occasion to speak.

It must be at once frankly allowed that had Diétrich confined himself wholly and solely to the study of Rembrandt, and never done anything but remind us occasionally of the pencil of that great painter, he would scarcely have deserved his very extensive reputation. In art, as in literature, a mere imitator of one man will never make a name. How many imitators have there been in our own day of Dickens, and Jerrold, and Scott, and Cooper, and Bulwer; not one of whom has acquired any reputation of value. But how many living men are there, who, from a careful study of these and

other models, have, without possessing much creative genius, written and produced many works well worthy of being read. It is too much to ask that all those who amuse and instruct shall be original—it is enough that they do not slavishly adopt the style of one man, and seek unfairly to make a reputation of it.

The great talent of Diétrich, and that to which he in a great degree owes his extensive reputation, is, the universal power of his imitation. He caught, with rare aptitude, almost every style. When Rembrandt was the object of his study, he was dreamy, meditative, expressive in design, rapid and capricious in execution. But suddenly he found himself in presence of the vulgar and comic physiognomies of Adrian Van Ostade—heavy peasants smoking under a trellis-work of hops beside a pot of beer, great fat dowdies, with enormous heads and short legs. He was at once transformed; he gave up in an instant his Old and New Testament subjects; he drew grotesque heads, covered by coarse woollen caps or shapeless hats. His pencil became soft and unctuous; his colour, just now warm and golden, became cold, and was clothed in that beautiful blue tint which Ostade spread over most of his pictures, and which gives so much harmony and suavity to his compositions. "The Strolling Musicians" of Adrian Van Ostade is well known—a picture which becomes, so to speak, one of his masterpieces in the hands of the engraver Cornelius Visscher. Diétrich had the courage and boldness to re-paint this great work of the Dutch master. He has changed very little in the composition (p. 48). As in the picture of Ostade, the father, armed with his violin, towers above the troop of children who press around him. They cross a kind of door, or arcade, through which we distinguish the open sky and the country. Diétrich has taken some liberties with the details. We find in his picture a child blowing a bagpipe, which is not in that of Van Ostade. The physiognomies of the modern painter are also finer and more sarcastic, which proves that he did not thoroughly understand the sentiment and idea of his master. It was both philosophical and correct in Van Ostade to represent a sad and wearied sickness on the faces of that poor family dragged from village to village by misery. However, when correcting or travestying the thought of Adrian Van Ostade, Diétrich has, to a certain degree, been influenced by the painting of Van Ostade himself. Thus we easily recognise in the features of the father another of Van Ostade's personages, who also plays on the fiddle, and tells indelicate stories to some peasants sitting before the door of a rustic house.

The picture of Diétrich has been engraved by the celebrated Wille, a friend of the German painter. Wille possessed many of his pictures, and did much to make them known. Several compositions of Diétrich, indeed, were engraved by Wille. His engraving of the "Musicians" is a masterpiece of that art. Besides the picture of which we speak, Diétrich made an etching of one on the same subject. Smaller than his painting, it is also different from it in some of the minor details.

Diétrich often ventured to mix up the style and manner of several painters whom he had carefully studied in one single picture. This is the case with the "Rat-killer." In this picture, the general effect of which is original and very creditable to Diétrich, several of the physiognomies are copied from Van Ostade, while some belong to other distinguished masters; and indeed the general idea of the whole, and some of the faces, are very much in the style of Karel Dujardin, the landscape and animal painter.

In landscape-painting, he gives with a few touches, and as if playing with work, new and rare proofs of that extraordinary penetration which made him guess all those secrets that the great masters appeared to have carried away with them to the tomb. He revels with Berghem in the still depth of smiling valleys; he can tell the secrets of those skies of gold, and more transparent horizons, of Jean Both and his brother André; he is fully capable, when he likes, of following Everdingen to the very summit of his solitary rocks, where the wind moans incessantly through his lofty pines; or he will sit down with Ruysdael beside the noisy and foam-

* Hagedorn supplies us with this fact in his "Letter to an Amateur," but does not give us the name of the nobleman; but it appears that it was the very person to whom this letter was addressed.

ing cascade. "That waterfall," says Hagedorn, "which he painted for his friend Wille, would have excited the enthusiasm of Ruysdael and Everdingen, and the troubled surface of the water below would have warmed a Backhuysen or a Parcellis."

He excited considerable admiration in his own day, amongst contemporary artists and amateurs, by the way in which he discovered the mode of proceeding of certain masters. The grace, the suavity, the harmony of Poelemborg were familiar to him, as well as that of all others. Following the traces of Elzheimer, he painted a "Flight into Egypt" (p. 45), which is regarded as one of his masterpieces, and which excels in exactly opposite qualities to those he exhibited in his imitation of Rembrandt. We even find productions of the Chevalier Van der Werff, the most insipid of painters, imitated, on some occasions, by the pencil of Diétrich.

Burtin,* a great admirer of Diétrich, says: "A precise, learned, soft, and rich touch, combined with judicious glazing, always causes us to recognise the rare talent of Diétrich, though he has been so varied in style, and has chosen such subjects as the 'Village Quack,' the sublime 'Communion of St. Jerome,' the picturesque Calisto, and then risen to the admirable finish of his precious and valuable 'Flight into Egypt.' The composition, the design, the expression, all equally perfect, the learned attitudes, the graceful nobility, the striking truthfulness of the stuffs, the charms of the soft colouring, the *chiaroscuro* of a most piquant character, the admirable toning down of the lights, combined with the most soft and delicate pencilling, which surpasses even the finish of Van der Werff, place this masterpiece of Diétrich amid the pearls of art." We may, perhaps, have occasion to correct the enthusiasm of a man speaking of a picture which was his own property.

It was ten years and more since Diétrich had returned from Holland.† Since this journey he had not left the city of Dresden, where he lived, with the title of painter to the king of Poland, except to go to Brunswick. In 1743, however, he started on an expedition to Italy. The earnest desire he had always felt to see this classic land of painting, this soil of art and fancy, was not his only motive for undertaking the journey. Though he laboured without ceasing, and though his facility was something really surprising, he could not keep up with the tremendous demand that existed at the court of Dresden for his pictures. Already he had been obliged to fly to the Duke of Brunswick, and could not find with that prince the rest and repose he so much desired. He determined to place the broad expanse of several kingdoms between himself and his thoughtless admirers. But he did not remain absent more than two or three years. He came back to Dresden, where he remained until the hour of his death, which took place in 1774.

A Dutchman with the Dutch, Diétrich in Italy became quite an Italian. He there painted pictures in the style of Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa, as he had formerly painted in the styles of Berghem and Everdingen. "The easy drawing of this artist," says a biographer,‡ "is quite in the modern Roman style; the energy and lightness of his pencil appeared to unite the taste of the schools of Flanders and Italy, and his landscapes have often the freshness of Lucatelli, and the firmness of Salvator Rosa." We cannot indeed perceive, without considerable astonishment and surprise, in the same gallery, landscapes in the style of Guaspere, smiling country scenes in the style of Lucatelli, wild sights and romantic scenes such as Salvator Rosa would paint, and all of them signed by the name of Diétrich. But it is to the city of Dresden we must go to understand and appreciate Diétrich.

* *Traité des Connaissances nécessaires à l'amateur de tableaux.*

† According to Hagedorn, Diétrich appears to have gone to Holland only once in 1724. He returned to Dresden in 1735; but Papillon de la Ferté assures us that he returned in 1744, when coming back from Italy, and remained a long time.

‡ P. de la Ferté, *Extract from different works published on the Lives of Painters.* Paris, 1776, il. p. 55.

The gallery of that city, where he lived so many years, and which was his true country, contains numerous paintings from his hand, and in every conceivable style. There you can, in less than one hour, judge of the incredible subtlety of Diétrich's talent; and it appears as if, to show off this peculiarity of our artist, they have united purposely all the most opposite masters, those whom he successfully imitated with his hands. Here we have a pasticcio of Vandermeulen; there an imitation of Watteau; further on, a copy of the "Hundred Florin" piece of Rembrandt; but it is proper to observe, that these several trials do not give a very lofty idea of the master. In the gallery where we find such splendid Rembrandts, such charming Watteaus, we are more than anywhere else struck with the insufficiency of copies which are neither original nor correct imitations.

Thus the "Christ healing the Sick," so admirable, so lofty, so expansive in the original by Rembrandt, becomes a very cold production in the hands of Diétrich. The disposition of the figures is nearly the same. The *chiaroscuro* represents the same proportions of light and shade; but somehow, all this leaves the spectator indifferent. The sick people around our Saviour are not interesting, though their faces bear all the marks and signs of suffering and grief. The "Christ" of Diétrich is delicate and poetical, but there is not a trace of divinity in its composition any more than if it had been painted by David. There is no sign of any miraculous power in that figure or in that face. None can feel that sickening of the heart, none can feel tempted to weep, as men have been known to do when gazing at the sublime painting of Rembrandt. They are fictitious sighs, of which painting has caught but the show; it is a faint light without any natural warmth, an empty shadow without any imposing mystery.

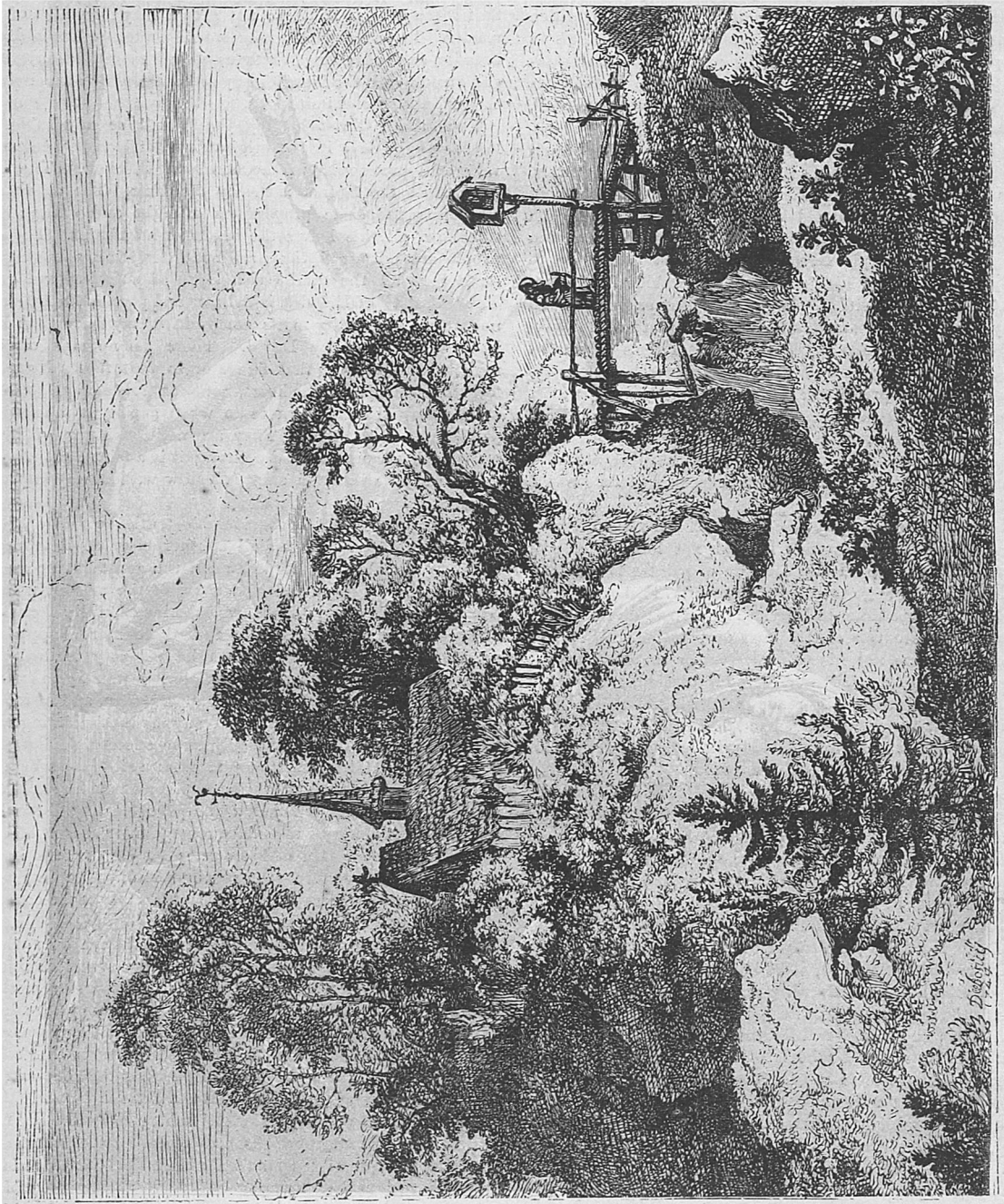
The same may, with considerable truth, be said of "The Presentation to the Temple," another copy of Rembrandt, which is equally cold and awkward, the artist having merely imitated the vulgarity and coarseness of the master, without one iota of his poetry. But if we examine carefully the whole Dresden gallery, we find here and there more happy and successful imitations. Whenever he had only to deal with artists whose merit was wholly exterior, if we may so express ourselves, Diétrich, clever to seize appearances, and incredible in his subtlety when the secrets of any mode of painting were to be discovered, was invariably more successful, and often triumphant. If he undertakes to paint a sketch by Vandermeulen, he succeeds in painting a picture which recalls that master, but in such a way that the pasticcio in the freedom and liberty of its style resembles some painter near at hand—say like Parrocel. He makes attempts upon the most opposite artists, in their turn—the precious Miéris, the easy Subleyras—and reproduces what may be described as the costume of their thought, if not the thought itself.

One day, when painting one of those little canvases where he delighted in representing over again the favourite subjects of Cornelius Poelemborg, he painted a very pretty picture, which few, who have visited the Dresden gallery, can have failed to observe, in which he has been exceedingly successful in the expression. It is, indeed, only from the chaste and delicate tone of the style and the painting that the subject can be looked at with pleasure. It is a little more nude than any of the works of the gentle Poelemborg himself. Diétrich has, in this instance, represented an episode in the constantly recurring subject of "Diana's Bath." The chaste goddess surprises two of her nymphs under circumstances which, according to the mythological view of her character, are objectionable. They have allowed men to violate the sanctity of her grove. The power of the painter is here indeed very great, whether we examine the faces of the goddess, the nymphs, or the men. Nothing could be more difficult than to represent the astonishment and anger of the goddess, the guilty fear of the nymphs, and the curiosity and pretended alarm of the men. Diétrich here, without copying any one, has manifested great power and originality. The figures, too, are gracefully and elegantly modelled. The nymphs are in

the water, up to their waists, save only one, who has been seeking to escape the angry glances of Diana, and whose feet only are in the water. This figure is most admirably painted, while the outline and form are exceedingly graceful and beautiful.

The French school, which then exercised such a decisive influence in Germany, could not but excite the curiosity and

to the antique, while Winkelmann laid his erudition and his fanatical enthusiasm at the service of that reform; Watteau was more admired at Weimar than he ever was at Paris. Diétrich, naturally enough, then adopted Watteau as one of his masters, and began to plagiarise his "Conversation on the Grass," his charming and fascinating masquerades, in which the whole world appears to us with its joys, its dreams, its loves,



THE WOODEN BRIDGE.—FROM A PAINTING BY DIÉTRICH.

draw the attention of Diétrich. The one most admired in the little courts, which made up so large a part of Germany, was the admirable Watteau, the delight of the fair sex. A celebrated connoisseur of that time informs us that there were courts, where the paintings of Watteau were more popular than any of the Italian masters, not even excepting Raffaele himself. Thus, while Vien, Drouais, and David were meditating the reform of the French school, and a solemn return

and its sadness, under the aspect and dress and fanciful appearance of the Italian stage. But to interpret and render Watteau, it is not sufficient to have seductive colouring, and a power of using rose, vermillion, and blue; it is necessary to have his mind, his vast and prodigious imagination, his adorable caprices, his insatiable love of reverie and pleasure; it is necessary to have an intuitive belief in the passion of love, as Watteau had. Diétrich confined himself wholly to

the outward surface, and copied Watteau without understanding him; he only saw the sheath of the beautiful and brilliant blade. It is therefore very visible that in his pastorals his grace is borrowed, his delirium pretended, and his passion feigned. As for Diétrich's lovers, they are by no means the lively triflers of Watteau; they are sad, and dull, and monotonous.

who did not care a fig for Diétrich, who studied these Bourguignons, and declared that their touch was inimitable."

All that we have previously remarked and quoted sufficiently demonstrates to the mind of the reader that Diétrich spent the greater part of his life, and expended nearly the whole of his energies, in the somewhat sterile and thankless task of painting an innumerable quantity of pasticcios. While per-



THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.—FROM A PAINTING BY DIÉTRICH.

He was once more successful and pleasing, when the handling of the pencil, the fire of the touch, and practice and experience had to play the principal part. "In his youth," says Hagedorn, "he amused himself by imitating Bourguignon. He was so eminently successful that, having re-painted two battle scenes by this great master, which had been brought from Italy, and had been spoiled by the way, connoisseurs took them for Bourguignons. We knew a stranger

severing in this spirit of imitation, which led him to wander through the galleries and museums of Europe in preference to studying nature, Diétrich obeyed an impulse which then was purely natural. During the whole of the first half of the eighteenth century, science, literature, art, politics, industry, in Germany, were but timid and unfortunate imitations. All the originality and genius of Germany seemed to have been exhausted in the first years of the sixteenth

century. "The political and religious wars," says Madame de Stael, in her able work on Germany, "when the Germans were unfortunate enough to fight one against the other, turned away all persons' attention from literature; and when they began to think of it again, it was under the auspices of the age of Louis XIV., at the time when the desire to imitate the French had obtained possession of most of the courts and writers of Europe. The works of Hagedorn,* of Gellert, of Weiss, are but heavy French. Nothing original, nothing which was in conformity with the genius of the nation, was produced."

What Madame de Stael very properly and correctly observes of the literature of Germany at that time, may be equally justly applied to the pictures of the two artists who flourished in that country towards the same epoch. The works of Mengs, his portraits alone excepted, are but heavy and disfigured Raffaelles. Diétrich, despite his prodigious ability, has to endure the reproach of having laid a heavy hand on Rembrandt, diminished Salvator, obscured Claude Lorraine, and vulgarised Poelemborg, except in one instance, where he improved him.

In general, works on the divine art of painting have been rather recklessly prodigal of praise to Diétrich. This is very easily explained. Most persons, until of late years, who have written books on painting and the works of painters, were what are called amateurs of *tableaux*. More alive to the material qualities of the execution than to the general character of a work, or to the mighty inspiration of genius, these superficial connoisseurs, these men who live at sales, think every composition admirable, the arrangement of which is able, the *chiaroscuro* well developed, and the pencil managed with ability. As all these varied merits are to be found in the works of Diétrich, they have praised him beyond all reason, and little is wanting for these writers to have placed him on a level with the masters he has copied.

It is the province of the sincere and impartial critic to be more severe. Imitation, even when it is perfect, is proof of want of power. What characterises genius is the fact that it is true and new, as creative in its mode of proceeding as in its inspirations. If Rembrandt has a manner, which is not that of Titian or Corregio, it is because this great painter manifested in his works his thought, his soul, his very life. To a certain extent one can reproduce the system of composition, of style, of touch, and tone of the great masters; but how can we hope to grasp the fire of that genius which gives principal value to their inventions? Besides, of what use would it be? To imitate is to weaken. Every imitator has been fatally condemned to remain below his model. If he were but nearly the equal of the great men he copies, would he think of imitating them? In art none can walk on the road marked out by genius; it is effaced and leaves no mark, like the wake of the sea. Diétrich—called by himself and by some of his contemporaries Diétricy; so little original was he as to deny his own name—is a striking proof of the truth of this axiom. There is not one of his innumerable pasticcios which can be advantageously compared to the original works which have inspired them; and we must ascribe to courtesy, or to natural self-love, the judgment of a contemporary who says:—"He is with these masters all that he wishes to be; he feels himself the beauty of their productions. Always full of his subject, a master with an easy pencil, he renders with warmth the sentiment he feels, and adds original beauties to those which strike him in the inventions of others."

We are perfectly well aware that painters of the very first order of merit have delighted in manifesting the flexibility of their pencils, and have painted in the manner and in imitation of all masters, with such success that they have placed the judgment of connoisseurs at fault. We are perfectly well aware that this peculiar talent gained for Teniers the name of the Proteus of painting. But if Teniers had not combined with this one style of merit that of excelling in the style

peculiar to him, he would not have become immortal. It is not because he copied in one picture the whole gallery of Philippe IV., that he is placed in the front rank of the masters of the Flemish school. He owes his most solid glory to those grotesque *fantasias* in which the spirit of the author is seen revelling in the free outline, and in the rapid and light touches, of his magic pencil.

We must not, however, for one moment suppose that Diétrich never did anything from his own inspiration—from his own genius, and that his individuality is never brought out. Even in his pasticcios he has not been able so to disguise himself as that it is impossible to recognise him. In vain has he abdicated his nature. In him is always found the German master: the pieces which are called his masterpieces, like the "Flight into Egypt," and the "Communion of St. Jerome," belong rather to the precise and pointed style of Van der Werff, of Elzheimer, of Poelemborg, than to the school of bold colourists, such as Rembrandt, Rubens, and Salvator. His design is often wanting in grace; we can find fault with certain stiffness in his draperies; his touch is dry and thin; his colouring is wanting in brightness and sharpness.

These defects, easily noted by an experienced eye, in divers degrees, in all the works of Diétrich, are especially to be remarked in his original works. The picture which is to be seen in the Louvre, and the subject of which is taken from the Scriptures, representing "Christ and the Woman taken in Adultery," gives a very good idea of the qualities of this painter, and of the imperfections of his talent. By his elaborate study of Rembrandt he had acquired a most incontestable power of disposing of light and shade. Thus, on the canvas we allude to, the woman, who is the principal personage of the picture, is lighted up brilliantly. She forms, so to speak, a luminous circle, of which the rays glide somewhat weakened upon the figure of the Saviour, and are lost by a series of learned effects—are melted away, in fact, in the two corners of the picture where stand the groups of old men.

The colouring of this canvas is harmonious, the touch warm and rich, though in some places thin; but the opposition of lights and shadows wants frankness, and thence it arises that the effect of the whole is weak. The drawing is poor in expression; the physiognomies, especially that of Christ, are wanting in elevation and life. The features of the young woman are charming in grace and Germanic candour; but this face, faithful mirror of a soul scarce woke to sensation, belongs rather to an innocent virgin than to her whose sins were forgiven her, and unto whom He said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."

This form of a woman was to Diétrich one of those types of beauty which the artist prefers to all others, and the image of which is renewed on all occasions by his pencil. It is found in another work by the same artist, engraved by Schmidt in 1775, where we see "Sarah leading her servant Hagar to the aged Abraham;" it is also seen again in the Virgin represented in "The Flight into Egypt." Though the form and conception of "The Woman taken in Adultery" belong properly to Diétrich, he could not help yielding here, as elsewhere, to his intense love for imitation: the personages who surround Christ are quite in the style and after the manner of Rembrandt; and we might apply to it the rather bold words of Michael Angelo, who said to a young painter, after admiring his work: "This is a very clever work, will please everybody, and make the reputation of the artist; unless, indeed, the varied authors of limbs and arms, and hands and legs, were each to claim their own. A pretty state of things indeed would then ensue!"

Diétrich, as laborious as any of the masters whom he took for a model, has left a great number of etchings. He has perhaps shown more ability in wielding his point than his brush. Unfortunately, his engravings, like his pictures, are copies. The great library of Paris, in its wonderful collection of engravings, possesses two proofs of the two first pieces engraved by Diétrich. One represents a strand on the borders of the sea, the other a scene in country life. In these first attempts it appears that Diétrich intended to follow in

* This Frederick Hagedorn was the brother of Charles Christian Louis, author of several works on painting.

the track of Van der Velde, when that great master himself was yet scratching the copper with an inexperienced hand. The timid point glides over the plate, the lines are as fine as hairs, and the whole is a confused mass. Later, in 1731, a "Christ Preaching" is executed in quite another taste; the point is heavy, the dashes stiff and symmetrical, a little in the ancient German style. But we must not be unjust enough to judge our artist from the works of his youth. The true Diétrich, considered as an engraver, exists in those plates where he has imitated the portraits and the religious compositions of Rembrandt, the landscapes of Everdingen, the rocks of Salvator. If some of these productions are beautiful enough to make us sometimes doubt the name of the author, it must be owned that the etchings of Diétrich, now fine and light, now energetic, are presently too black and too overloaded with shadows, failing in the magic and wonderful effects of the painter of Leyden. And then how could he succeed—he, a German artist, cold in imagination and patient by nature—in discovering the audacious fancy of the point of Rembrandt? But his landscapes, in the style of Everdingen, of Ruysdael, and of Salvator, his imitations of Ostade and of Berghem, are admirable. It is much and always to be regretted, that he did not finish his "Christ Healing the Sick." The composition of this engraving is combined with great art. If Diétrich could have completed it, there is no doubt that it would have been remembered as his best work, as his masterpiece.

When we consider with what attention the portrait of Diétrich, painted by himself, is executed, we are very much struck by the gentle and placid beauty of his countenance. A calm intelligence beams upon his lofty forehead; but in his eyes, large and pure, one is easily able to detect rather a sagacious and frank mind and character, than a profound soul. The inward flame of genius is not seen, but a delicate sensibility, accessible to every impression from without. Nature seems to have written his destiny in his face. In the history of the arts, as in literature, celebrity is the lot of only those men who are gifted with a rare and positive original inspiration. Really great painters have been distinguished from each other by such marked characteristics, that none could fail to recognise them. It was upon condition of being unique, to speak in his own style, that each obtained his brevet of celebrity. Their names even cannot be pronounced without recalling to the mind the idea of perfection in one of the essential branches of art. Diétrich was not one of these. By very opposite qualities, he has saved his name from oblivion. Gifted with the surprising faculty of taking, like old Proteus, every form, and every appearance, he is like everybody, and he is never like himself. But he often carries pasticcio to such perfection, that he astonishes even those whose severe taste rejects these imitations as plagiarisms unworthy of his genius.

To compare and paint in the style of others, is properly to make what is called a pasticcio, a kind of art which we must not confound with a mere copy. Good copies of a master are often precious objects, because they multiply and spread abroad the noble pleasure one has in gazing upon a masterpiece. Clever and faithful, the copyist gives us the facsimile of a picture much better even than the engraver, because he gives character to the design, to the composition, to the justice of the *chiaroscuro*—that is to say, of the effect, the qualities of tone and touch so agreeable for us to survey. The pasticcio, on the other hand, never gives anything but a false idea of the original master to those who knew him not, and only inspires regrets in those who know him. Unless you rise to the ranks of those sublime painters who take their property, as Molière says, where they find it, or who, as Voltaire says, kill their men, it is rare that you do not weaken the ideas of others when you steal them. As for the painter Diétrich, we may quote the words of the poet:—

"Coloriste aujourd'hui, demain dessinateur,
Et, même en inventant, toujours imitateur,
Diétrich fut tour-à-tour Van Ostade, Corrège;
De Protée, en son art, il eut le privilège,

Et eut, dans ses tableaux, fleuri, suave et grand,
Recommencer Watteau, Poelembert et Rembrandt.*"

Diétrich has engraved about two hundred subjects, of which copies are very rare. He has treated subjects from Bible history, and profane story; he has engraved half figures and head studies, pastoral scenes, views, and landscapes.

In Bible history he has engraved nineteen subjects; amongst which the most remarkable are "Lot and his Daughters," "Abraham Sacrificing Isaac," "Isaac on his knees before the Pile," "Abraham Sacrificing the Ram—these four plates no longer exist—"Christ surrounded by the Doctors," twenty-six figures; "Christ healing the Sick," also with twenty-six figures; "The Descent from the Cross," with nineteen figures; "St. James Preaching in a Village," with seven figures; "The Nativity," and "The Flight into Egypt," in the style of Rembrandt.

In profane story he has many. "Venus on the Rocks," imitated from Poelembert; "The Combats of the Tritons," in the style of Salvator Rosa; "The Satyr and the Passerby," from Jordaens; "The Spectacle Dealer," six figures, in the style of Van Ostade; "The Knife-grinder and the Cobbler" (p. 49), "The Dealer in Poison for Rats" (p. 41), "The Dentist," "The Quack," all in the style of the same master; "Belisarius Begging," a very rare and beautiful engraving; and "The Dinner," a piece equally rare and equally admirable.

Subjects in half figures and heads are "The Strolling Musicians" (p. 48), engraved in the style of Rembrandt, and imitated from Van Ostade; "The Tea-Party," "The Dutch Priest," "The Monk with the Beard," "The Man with Moustaches," "An Old Man standing erect," and heads of women and children.

Pastoral scenes, views, and landscapes are "Young Girls at the Entrance of a Cavern," "Herdsmen leaning on a Cow"—these two compositions are imitated from Poelembert—"A Shepherd tending his Flock," from Berghem; "Landscape with Ruins," six landscapes; "The Chapel," "The Wooden Bridge" (p. 44), "The Flock," "The Lake," in the style of Salvator; "A Cowherd, with a stick in his hand," "Two Hermits," "Two Peasants," "Studies of Animals: He-Goats, She-Goats, Rams, Sheep, Lambs, the Goatherd, and three Goats."

The nineteen pieces from Holy History were sold at the Royal sale for £14 in 1817.

Most public galleries in Europe possess pictures by Diétrich. The Louvre has "The Woman taken in Adultery," which was only valued at £24 in 1816.

Belgium has the portrait of the artist, engraved, in 1765, by Schmuzer. It is given at page 41.

The Museum of Vienna has "The Shepherds," a night-piece, signed and dated 1760; and "The Adoration of the Shepherds," another night-piece, executed the same year.

The Royal Pinacothek Museum of Munich is richer. It has five pictures by Diétrich: "Lazarus in the Bosom of Abraham," "The Avaricious Man in Hell," "A Landscape on the Sea Shore," "A Landscape, with Fishermen's Huts," "Two Blind Men leading one another."

At Dresden there are fifty pictures by this master, of which the principal ones are: "A Man, a Woman, and a Boy Feeding some Sheep," in the style of Bassan; "The Portrait of the Mother of Diétrich," "The Adoration of the Magi," "The Presentation to the Temple," "The Prodigal Son," "The Marriage Feast of Cana," "A Pastoral Scene," in the style of Watteau; "A Flock of Sheep and Goats, guarded by the Shepherd and Shepherdess," "A Holy Family, by the light of a Lanthorn," "Christ Curing the Sick," "Christ on the Cross," "Mercury and Argus," and "Nymphs Bathing."

* To day a colourist, to-morrow a sketcher, and even when inventing always an imitator, Diétrich was in turns Van Ostade and Corregio. In the arts he had the privilege of Proteus, and was able, in his flowery, sweet, and grand pictures, to reproduce Watteau, Poelembert, and Rembrandt.

A few prices at different sales may be interesting.

Blondel de Gagny, 1776. "Two Landscapes," £15.

Sale of the Prince de Conti, 1777. The "Flight into Egypt," £91; "The Bathers," £166; "Twelve Women, in a Landscape," £95.

Sale of Randon de Boisset, 1777. "A Landscape," with animals, £78.

Cardinal Fesch's Sale, 1849. "Flight into Egypt," £37.

The pictures represented in our pages give various instances of his style.

The first is the little cut, representing a "Dealer in Poison for Rats" (p. 41). This is a clever production—man, dog, dress, rats, are all in keeping.

"The Knife-Grinder and the Cobbler" (p. 49) is a very



THE STROLLING MUSICIANS.—FROM A PAINTING BY DIETRICH.

Sale of Marin, 1790. Two fine "Landscapes," £81; two others, £33; another, £20.

Sale of Lanjeac, 1802. Two "Landscapes, with Bathers," £69.

Solirene Sale, 1812. "Resurrection of Lazarus," £83.

Laperière Sale, 1817. "The rest of the Holy Family," £70.

Sale Lenoir Dubreuil, 1821. "The Presentation to the Temple," £57."

able picture. The cobbler in his stall, the cat above, and the queer old knife-grinder, are all faithfully given. The colouring of this is very rich, and the play of lights and shades very forcible.

"The Halt of the Holy Family" (p. 52), though ably painted, is defective in costume. The Virgin in her dress is too like an Italian peasant girl, while the infant Jesus is perfectly Dutch. It is also, however, an able painting in the colouring.

"The Strolling Musicians" (p. 48) is witty in conception and ably carried out. The players are vigorously rendered, and the *chiaroscuro* is admirable.

"The Flight into Egypt" (p. 45) is to a certain extent powerful; but, though not wanting in *chiaroscuro* and general tone, is defective in the figures.

"The Wooden Bridge" (p. 44) is pretty, tasteful, and original.

Smith, in his Catalogue, gives the following observations on Diétrich: "Many very clever pictures, from the pencil of this painter in the style of Rembrandt, partly merit him a place in the present list. He was born at Weimar, in Saxony,

the court of Dresden to send him to Italy. How long he studied in that far-famed school, or what were the important advantages he derived from it, does not readily appear in his works, for these reflect the style and peculiarities of other masters' pictures, as Rembrandt, Poelenberg, Ostade, and Salvator Rosa; but those of the former artist appear to have made the greatest impression on him, for he imitated them so servilely, that even his original compositions have the appearance of being, in many instances, copies from his favourite painter's picture. Two of his finest productions of this man, representing a 'Crucifixion' and the 'Entombment,' brought some years ago in public sale upwards of



THE KNIFE-GRINDER AND THE COBBLER.—FROM A PAINTING BY DIÉTRICH.

in 1712, and having acquired a knowledge of the rudiments of his art from his father—a painter of very moderate abilities—

three hundred guineas; and a picture by his hand, of very superior merit, in the manner of A. Ostade, engraved by

Diétrich; Pinx. 1753; Diétrich-feul 1763.

and afterwards improved himself under Alexander Thiele, a landscape-painter, he gave such proofs of genius as to induce

Wille, under the title of the 'Musiciens Ambulants,' is in the collection of Richard Simmonds, Esq."